German Expellee Organizations between "Homeland" and "At Home": A Case Study of the Politics of Belonging

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Abstract

Since the expulsion of more than ten million ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe after the end of the Second World War, the political and cultural organizations of the expellees have advocated the interests of this segment of the Federal Republic's population. The article examines the various ways in which activists in the expellee organizations have used the ambiguity of homeland and belonging in the political process in Germany and increasingly in Europe to further a political agenda that, while it has undergone major changes, remains deeply problematic in some of its objectives and many of its implications.

Résumé

Depuis l'expulsion de plus de 10 millions de personnes d'ethnie allemande d'Europe Centrale et d'Europe de l'Est après la fin de la deuxième Guerre mondiale, les organisations politiques et culturelles des expulsés ont milité en faveur de cette section de la population de la République Fédérale. L'article examine comment les activistes appartenant aux organisations des expulsés ont profité de l'ambiguïté entourant les concepts de patrie et d'appartenance dans le cadre des processus politiques en Allemagne et, de plus en plus, dans le reste de l'Europe, pour faire avancer un agenda politique qui, même s'il a connu des changements majeurs, reste toujours extrêmement problématique par rapport à certains de ses objectifs et plusieurs de ses implications.

Introduction

Between 1945 and 1950, one of the largest forced migrations in European history took place: as a consequence of the Second World War almost fourteen million ethnic Germans fled or were expelled from their traditional homelands in Central and Eastern Europe.[1] Of the survivors, approximately two-thirds were resettled in the American and British zones of occupation, and one-third in the Soviet zone. Thus, the population of the newly established Federal Republic of Germany comprised around one-sixth of people whose geographic and cultural background, although not homogeneous in itself, was significantly different from that of their new environment, and who had recently experienced uprooting and expulsion from their homeland.[2] Therefore, and because of their large numbers and widespread distribution across occupied Germany, the expellees were visible victims themselves, but their very presence also increased the self-perception of victimhood among the indigenous population who were required to share with them what little was available in terms of food and shelter. The belonging of the expellees to the re-emerging German polity was therefore not uncontested in the beginning, precisely because the expellees themselves as well as the indigenous population did not perceive those parts of Germany to which the expellees had come to be their homeland. Thus, the sense of victimhood among the expellees differed in another crucial respect from that of the rest of the German population: the loss of their homeland. This dimension has subsequently provided an additional impetus for a collective

identity to be formed among refugees and expellees from very diverse countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

The resultant politics of homeland also became a politics of belonging rooted in a certain sense of (deliberate) ambiguity of what and where the expellees' homeland was, and how and where they belonged. This ambiguity has proven to be a salient factor and can explain why, despite the fact that the integration of the expellees was more or less completed by the late 1950s, a so-called expellee identity remained a political factor to be reckoned with—particularly in relation to the reconciliation process between Germany and its neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe, well into the twenty-first century.

In the following, I will examine the various ways in which activists in the expellee organisations have used the ambiguity of homeland and belonging in the political process in Germany and increasingly in Europe to further a political agenda that, while it has undergone major changes, remains deeply problematic in some of its objectives and many of its implications.

After a brief theoretical exploration of the concepts of homeland and belonging in the context of forced migrations, I proceed chronologically in my analysis of the policies of the expellee organizations over the past half-century, paying particular attention to the domestic political process in Germany and to the country's relationship with Poland and the Czech Republic. I conclude with some general observations on the likely future significance of homeland and belonging.

Conceptualizing Belonging

That "identity and belonging are . . . potentially divisive" is an observation made by Anthony Giddens in his seminal work *The Third Way*.[3] This divisiveness is a result of another, and equally fundamental, function of identity and belonging, namely to express bonds between certain people but not others. Furthermore, there is also a relationship between identity and belonging: without identity, there is no belonging. In this way, identity, both as a self- and other-assigned category, determines where people belong, or to use a phrase coined by Ignatieff "belonging ... means being recognised and being understood."[4] This fundamental socio-psychological need for recognition and understanding is all the more important in circumstances of forced migration because the sense of belonging, not just to a particular community, but also to a specific place, is brutally disrupted, and the reason for this disruption is often located by the perpetrators of forced migration in the particular community's ethnic or national identity. It is the very purpose of forced migrations to destroy the physical connection of community and place. As such, forced migration is the result of the struggle between two mutually exclusive conceptions of belonging: those who are perceived not to belong to the (territorially) defined community are expelled, regardless of whether they feel they belong to the contested piece of land as much as it belongs to them. Since for most communities place is a crucial component of their identity, the loss of spatial attachment makes their identity incomplete. Until a new place can fill this gap, i.e., become a new source of identification, there will always be some longing for return to the homeland, for its repossession by the community forced from it.

The often problematic implication of this is perhaps best described as "the extreme ambiguity of place as a political guide."[5] A lost homeland is a powerful source of political mobilization and action, and the assertion of a right to this homeland can manifest itself in policy agendas of reconquest, return, and the preservation of the homeland's "ethnic" characteristics. Even if claims to the lost homeland are merely "theoretical," because there is no real opportunity ever to realize them, they play an essential role in the preservation of the community's identity and thus of the community as a distinct collective. Especially in relation to ethnically motivated forced migrations, the preservation of an identity that can continue to hold an expelled community together is crucially related to territory. No political entrepreneur that depends on the existence of an ethnically/nationally defined community will be able to "instil in people a sense of kinship and brotherhood without attaching them to a place that they feel is theirs, a homeland that is theirs by right of history."[6] In turn, then, the preservation of this bond to "the historic land, the land of past generations, the land that saw the flowering of the nation's genius"[7] is the key condition for the continued existence of his/her specific constituency, and it is therefore in the political entrepreneur's foremost interest to keep the sense of loss, but also a sense of provisionality, i.e., a sense of the ultimate possibility of return to the lost homeland, alive. The politics of belonging, as well as the politics of homeland, is therefore as much opportunistic calculation about power as it is an expression of primordial dimensions of ethnic identity.

However, there is another aspect of the "extreme ambiguity of place as political guide" that deserves attention. If belonging is "first and foremost about protection from violence," or in other words, if "where you belong is where you are safe and where you are safe is where you belong,"[8] the forceful disruption of the physical link between a community and its homeland can equally eliminate the (lost) homeland as a focus of the community's identity in the sense of a desirable place to return. Rather, successful integration into another safe place can create a new sense of belonging. At its best, integration would make belonging irrelevant in the sense that it is

no longer an issue because protection (and other state services) can be taken for granted, because cultural diversity, if there is any, does not matter politically, and because the belonging of those who lost their homeland is not contested by anyone. In the face of such a "new homeland" becoming a source of identification, the wish to return to the lost homeland, if it continues to exist at all, becomes strictly conditional. One scenario of possible return would be to extend the achieved degree of protection to the past homeland through reconquest and the elimination of any threat by its new inhabitants (through expulsion, oppression, consociation, etc.). Another scenario would be a fundamental change of the political conditions in the homeland that would make it safe to return there. A third scenario is likely in cases where the expulsion of the community in question has only been partial, that is, parts of the community have been able to remain in the homeland. Then it is also possible that the homeland retains its relevance for individual and collective identities if the expellee community can maintain ties with the "homeland community" and thus with the homeland itself. These scenarios may change over time and may take any of the above forms, but more importantly may also manifest themselves in "homeland tourism," and in initiatives supporting those members of the community who still live in the homeland as well as in efforts to preserve the "ethnic character" of the homeland.[9] If none of these scenarios is perceived to be realistic, the lost homeland will gradually lose its importance as a focus of identity. As this runs counter to the interests of political entrepreneurs who can only thrive as "representatives" of an actually existing community, they will deploy all their skills and resources to ensure that at least one scenario continues to be perceived as realistic.

However, even if they fail in doing so, a lost homeland can retain its identity-forming capacity. Not only will there always be certain historic memories of the community associated with it, the actual loss of it, i.e., the event of the forced migration from the homeland, provides a no-less-powerful source of identification with, and belonging to, a community of people that have suffered a similarly traumatic experience. Political agendas resulting from such a conception of the lost homeland are likely to include claims for compensation for material losses and suffering, but equally important claims for recognition and acknowledgement of such losses and suffering. Especially when the physical homeland has "lost its attraction," symbolic politics of homeland and belonging can be similarly potent sources of political mobilization, providing political entrepreneurs with the power base they seek. Yet, even such more symbolic forms of the politics of homeland and belonging cannot do without reference to the continued existence of the homeland, even if it is beyond the grasp and reach of the community in question. Thus, no matter whether it is the physical recovery of the homeland or the symbolic and/or compensatory recognition of its loss, the politics of belonging always is, at least partly, also the politics of homeland.

In the context of forced migrations, belonging is the result of a multitude of complex past and present social and political processes. It is a multi-dimensional phenomenon rooted in temporal and spatial conceptions of ethnicity and nationhood, while equally being a product of political entrepreneurship championing or exploiting feelings of resentment or entitlement, grief or injustice. The case of the German expellee organizations is a good example to demonstrate the significance of the notion of homeland and its relationship with other dimensions in the politics of belonging. In order to maintain a sense of community among the millions of expellees, their most active political entrepreneurs developed two distinct yet closely connected meanings of the notion of belonging. On the one hand, "belonging" came to signify that the expellees belonged to the (West) German state and cultural nation, establishing a political-legal connection between them and the society to which they had come, which entitled them not only to full citizenship rights, but also to a variety of compensation measures. With citizenship came voting rights, and with voting rights came the recognition by politicians that expellees were an important constituency whose vote made a difference in local, state, and federal elections, giving the expellee organizations important leverage over a number of domestic and foreign policy issues, the latter particularly connected to their former homelands. The other meaning that "belonging" acquired in this specific context is best described in terms of "ethnic ownership," i.e., the belief that the lost homelands of the expellees continue to belong to them on the basis of historic, ethnic rights. This insistence on the inalienable right to their homeland has manifested itself in claims for the possibility of returning there and for compensation for losses and suffering. The public debates, or lack thereof, that address these issues of belonging have affected the formulation and outcomes of policies over the past half-century to varying degrees. The notion of belonging in its various dimensions has been used by the political representatives of the German expellees to further their and their constituency's objectives. Their opportunities to realize these objectives have been determined by political dynamics in Germany and Europe on which the expellee organizations have had only little or no influence. However, by focusing on domestic issues, as well as aspects of foreign relations between Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic, I will show that the political role of these organizations in shaping pre-

1989 and post-1989 developments in Germany and Europe must not be underestimated.

Forging and Institutionalizing a New Collective Identity

The social, economic, and political reconstruction of West Germany was the major domestic issue in the immediate post-war period, and the millions of expellees played an important part in this effort, contributing, in particular, to modernization and structural changes in underdeveloped and rural areas to which many of them had been resettled. This proactive integration signified that the expellees considered themselves as belonging to the polity of the emerging West German state. Some of their leading representatives had quickly risen in the hierarchies of the major political parties and played an important role in shaping specific legislative and policy measures aimed at expellee integration, such as the 1952 *Lastenausgleichsgesetz* (War Burden Redistribution Act) and the 1953 *Bundesvertriebenengesetz* (Federal Expellee and Refugee Law). These measures reflected the political will to integrate the expellees both economically and politically, and thus mirrored their perception of belonging.[10] Apart from providing the legal basis for the social and economic integration of the expellees, the two laws legally defined the category of an expellee, thus shaping the notion of belonging to this particular collective in the public and political spheres in terms of the loss of homeland as a consequence of expulsion (defined as both deportation and flight) and in terms of a consequential entitlement to specific measures of integration and compensation.

The importance for the expellee organizations and their constituency of realizing this perception of belonging was also highlighted in the 1950 Charter of the German Expellees, in which three of the four central demands are about the expellees' integration into the West German state.[11] By the time this charter was formulated, the expellees had already overcome the resistance of the Western Allies to allow them the creation of their own political and cultural organizations. From 1949 onwards, these began to develop in a dual structure. The Central Union of Expelled Germans (*Zentralverband vertriebener Deutscher*, or ZvD) was founded in April 1949 and renamed in 1951 to Union of Expelled Germans (*Bund vertriebener Deutscher*, or BvD). It focussed its activities on the social and economic issues of integration. At the party-political level, this had its equivalent in the Union of Expellees and Disenfranchised/All-German Union (*Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechteten/Gesamtdeutscher Bund*, or BHE/GB), which was represented in the German federal parliament, the Bundestag, between 1950 and 1957 and was part of the government between 1953 and 1955. Concerned with the preservation of the cultural heritage of the expellees, the Union of Eastern German Regional-Cultural Associations (*Verband der ostdeutschen Landsmannschaften*, or VoL) was founded in August 1949 and, after the admission of further regional-cultural associations from southeastern Europe, renamed in 1952 to Union of Regional-Cultural Associations (*Verband der Landsmannschaften*, or VdL).

This dual focus of activities reflected not only the key interests of the majority of expellees, but was also an expression of an ambiguous sense of belonging. Deriving from their experience of loss and suffering, the demands for compensation and integration represented the desire to belong to the West German polity; that is, to be acknowledged and accepted as a member of the political, social, economic, and territorial community of citizens of the Federal Republic. In contrast, the wish to preserve a specific cultural heritage and to maintain as many links as possible among themselves and with their traditional homelands had its basis in the particular cultural and geographic backgrounds that distinguished the expellees from the indigenous population. It is also evidence of the preservation of a sense of belonging that is focussed on the lost homeland both from a territorial and a socio-cultural perspective.[12]

Shifting the Focus of Belonging (I): From Membership to Ownership

Because of the strong commitment of politicians across all parties, the interests of the western allies, and the proactive involvement of the expellees themselves, integration proceeded rapidly and was, for the most part, concluded by the late 1950s. This meant that one key feature (the demand for integration) of the expellee identity ceased to function as a mark of distinction and an effective source of mobilization. With belonging to the West German polity no longer contested, the issue vanished from the political arena. This was reflected in the failure of the BHE/GB to overcome the five per cent threshold in the 1957 federal elections, and in the political integration of many leading expellee activists into the major political parties that had already begun much earlier. The loss of this focal point and organizational vehicle of collective identity further meant that one crucial unifying aspect that had held expellees together despite their diverse cultural, geographic, and political backgrounds had disappeared. Consequently, the diversity of ideological and cultural traditions within the expellee community posed an increasing threat of disintegration. Thus, the notion of belonging had to be reshaped, institutionally as well as discursively.

The institutional change took place in 1958–59 when the previous duality of organization was overcome and the merger of the VdL with the BvD resulted in the

creation of a new organization, namely the Union of Expellees/United Regional-Cultural Associations and State Organisations (*Bund der Vetriebenen B Vereinigte Landsmannschaften und Landesverbände,* or BdV). This is an umbrella organization of the various regional-cultural associations (twenty-one), the state branches of the BdV (sixteen since 1990), and its associated organizations (five).[13] The BdV started out primarily as a lobby organization at federal and state levels. With its increasing political and public marginalization from the late 1960s onwards, it lost much of its influence and had to redefine its tasks. It expanded into the social sector, working especially with ethnic Germans migrating to Germany (the so-called *Aussiedler*) and, from the mid- to late 1980s onwards, establishing more and more cross-border contacts in the former homelands of the expellees.

Organizational restructuring went hand in hand with the discursive redefinition of belonging, which was at the same time the main source for the BdV's political marginalization. With the success of integration, the main focus of belonging switched from membership in the West German polity to the notion of ethnic ownership of the lost homelands of the expellees. This notion conceptualizes territory as place rather than as a tradable commodity and therefore implies that the entitlement of an ethnic group to live in and shape a specific territory, which is its place of origin, is independent of political boundaries and legal titles to property and land. In particular, the organizations representing the expellees from the Sudetenland and from the former eastern territories of the German Reich have subscribed to this conception of their former homelands. Increasingly, they became focussed on the only vaguely defined "right to the homeland." Simultaneously, however, they also began to formulate more pronounced claims for the restitution of property there and compensation for the suffering incurred as a consequence of the expulsion. These were not new elements in the rhetoric of the BdV, but earlier they had been counterbalanced in the BdV's public rhetoric by the notion of belonging focussed on integration. The notion of ethnic ownership became all the more prominent in the message of the BdV the more its implications were denounced in the political discourse and in the foreign policies of the Federal Republic after the change in government in 1969. This marked a political watershed in German politics, as for the first time since the end of the Second World War a centre-left government came to power. The impact on the expellee organizations was equally significant. Already the great coalition between the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) after 1966 had signalled a change in Germany's domestic and foreign policy with regard to the expellee issue. However, the period after 1969 saw a full-scale implementation of the new *Ostpolitik* (foreign policy towards Central and Eastern Europe), conceptually devised in the early 1960s by Egon Bahr on the premise that change in Central and Eastern Europe could best be affected by Germany through a policy of rapprochement that would require a recognition of the territorial status quo and efforts at reconciliation, in particular with Poland and Czechoslovakia. The treaties with both countries, in 1970 and 1973, respectively, signalled a paradigm shift in German policy and were widely denounced in the expellee community as betraying the legacy of those who were forced out of their ancestral homelands. From this perspective, belonging as the entitlement to equal rights and participation in the West German polity was not simply no longer an issue of struggling for integration, it became also, in a way, undesirable; the BdV leadership did everything to dissociate itself from this kind of mainstream politics in Germany that aimed at reconciliation with the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including an acknowledgement of the territorial status quo.[14]

In this context, it was also important that a political left-right divide over the expellee issue began to emerge more clearly. Until the late 1960s, expellees were politically active in all the major political parties and were able to influence their agendas.[15] However, the death in 1966 of Wenzel Jacksch, the former leader of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party, deprived the expellees of one of their most prolific public figures in general and of their most vocal member of the SPD. Other expellees, like Herbert Hupka, later a CDU member of the Bundestag, were quickly sidelined and left the SPD either to withdraw from public politics or to join other parties. The political left in Germany found it increasingly difficult to come to terms with the issue of the expulsions and began to marginalize it in its own discourse and more and more from the public discourse as well. This was facilitated by the relative success of the integration of the expellees and the declining importance of the issue for the general public. With the exception of Bavaria, a Sudeten German stronghold to this day, there was electorally little to gain from focussing on the expulsions after the mid-1960s, and the expellees found fewer and fewer credible public fora to voice their concerns. Consequently, the predominant tendency from the late 1960s and early 1970s was for them to withdraw to ever more extreme positions that found little favour even with the mainstream of the CDU. The long-term consequence of this was that both political and academic work on the expulsions became associated with right-wing politics, so that it was almost impossible until the mid- to late 1980s to find any objective treatment of the issue from the traditional left in Germany.[16]

Inevitably, this led to alienation between the leaders of the expellee organization and successive German governments until the early 1990s,[17] and it meant that expellee activists acquired a public reputation for harming and actively seeking to destroy the reconciliation process with Central and Eastern Europe.[18] It also resulted in a gap between the public discourse conducted by leading expellee activists and the objectives and activities of the organization's membership. The former continued to insist on the openness of the German-Polish border question, the need for an institutionalized right to return to the expellees' homelands, and their entitlement to the restitution of property and compensation from the states from which they were expelled (especially from Poland and Czechoslovakia). In contrast, "ordinary" expellees and their children and grandchildren had, at least since the middle of the 1980s, become engaged in the establishing of cross-border contacts with the people living in their former homelands. This included various privately funded and organized aid programs aimed at ethnic Germans who had stayed in their places of origin as well as at members of other ethnic communities, including the titular nations of these countries. Despite the rhetoric of some hardliners, there was, and is, no widespread desire among expellees and their children and grandchildren to return to their places of origin and permanently settle there.[19]

The collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989–90 offered new and different opportunities for the politics of belonging. To some extent, history repeated itself as belonging once again became an issue of membership in the German nation and of integration for several hundred thousand ethnic Germans, particularly from Poland and Romania, who migrated to the Federal Republic. For the first time in many decades, ethnic Germans from the (former) Soviet Union were also able to emigrate to Germany in large numbers. More importantly, the leadership of the expellee organizations saw the dawn of an unprecedented opportunity to pursue a reinvigorated politics of belonging focussed on the lost homeland. While it was the policy of the West German government to achieve the unification of the two German states even at the price of finally formally abandoning all territorial claims and guaranteeing the eastern borders of East Germany as those of the united Germany, activists of the expellee organizations tried to stage a referendum in Poland under the slogan "Peace through Free Choice." Suggesting that there was still a possibility for border changes, this raised completely unrealistic hopes among many members of the German minority in Poland, particularly in Upper Silesia where the response to the signature campaign in support of the referendum had been strong. Yet, it proved how unrealistic these hopes had been when Chancellor Kohl declared, at an event celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Charter of the German Expellees in 1990, that the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's eastern frontier was the price that had to be paid for the reunification of Germany.[20] While this did not stop expellee activists from continuing to pursue their particular politics of belonging, it forced them to rethink and adjust their agenda. Yet this was a gradual process.

Even though, for historical reasons, a border question similar to that between Germany and Poland never existed in the relationship between the Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic, the rhetoric of expellee activists has, if anything, been more aggressive on the Sudeten German issue in the early 1990s, demanding "unlimited sovereignty" for Sudeten Germans in their homeland[21] and rejecting the "belonging of the Sudetenland to any Czechoslovak state."[22] Since then, the rhetoric has changed in its tone, but not necessarily in its objectives. The newly elected Speaker of the Sudeten Germans, Bavarian Parliament President Johann Böhm, emphasized in his address to the Sudeten German Day in 2000 that demands for territorial autonomy were unlikely to succeed, nor, if successful, could they be implemented by the Sudeten Germans in a meaningful way. Yet, he added that personal autonomy[23] still was an appropriate demand, both more likely to succeed and more useful for the remaining ethnic Germans in the Czech Republic "as well as for any returnees, no matter how many or how few these may be."[24]

Clearly, the rhetoric and policies of the BdV in the early 1990s did not strike a positive cord with the German or the Czechoslovak and Polish governments. However, from around 1993 onwards, the political leadership of the expellee organizations adopted more conciliatory policies. The reason for this was partly that the German federal government had made further funding of the organizations dependent upon their participation in a policy of what could be called constructive reconciliation.[25] This meant that the expellee organizations would be included in the government's various aid programs to stabilize and improve the living conditions of ethnic Germans in their homelands,[26] and it thus offered them wider opportunities to reach out to their places of origin, which was particularly welcomed by rank and file members, many of whom had done exactly that for many years, but without anything similar to the resources available to them now.[27] Nevertheless, the relationship with Poland in particular became more relaxed, and representatives of the expellee organizations were received by the Polish Prime Minister and high-ranking government officials in the mid-1990s.[28]

Relations with the Czech Republic, in contrast, did not develop as smoothly. Despite the signing of the Treaty on Good Neighbourly and Friendly Relations in

1993, a variety of issues remained unresolved and continued to complicate bilateral relations. A renewed attempt to overcome the difficulties was made with the German-Czech Declaration of 1997. Signed after years of negotiations on January 21, 1997, it highlighted that the two governments could only agree on very little in relation to the two most critical issues: the role of the Sudeten Germans in the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and their collective victimization and expulsion after the end of the Second World War. The German government accepted the responsibility of Germany in the developments leading up to the Munich Agreement and the destruction of Czechoslovakia, expressed its deep sorrow over the suffering of Czechs during the Nazi occupation of their country, and acknowledged that it was these two issues that had prepared the ground for the post-war treatment and expulsion of members of the German minority in the country. The Czech government, on the other hand, regretted the post-war policy vis-à-vis ethnic Germans, which had resulted in the expulsion of a large section of the German minority and expropriation of their property. Both governments agreed that the remaining members of the German minority in the Czech Republic and the expellees and their descendants would play an important role in the future relationship of the two countries and that the support of the German minority in the Czech Republic was a matter of mutual interest. While many of the expelled Sudeten Germans and their descendants remained skeptical about the value of the Declaration,[29] it did acknowledge and legitimize certain long-standing aspects of the politics of belonging pursued by all expellee organizations. The Declaration recognized not only the fact of the expulsions, it also implied an acceptance of its injustice and of the victimization of innocent people. This would become a major issue in the politics of belonging in the years after 1997 when the notion of victimhood would regain its post-war prominence in a different context.

Shifting the Focus of Belonging (II): Reshaping Victimhood

From the perspective of the German government, the politics of belonging, as related to expellees and ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe, still concerned membership and integration: expellees and their representatives were members of the political process and could, under certain circumstances, fulfill a useful role in the process of reconciliation with the country's eastern neighbours. Ethnic Germans in these countries were still considered members of the German cultural nation, which entitled them to certain benefits, even if these benefits no longer automatically included the entitlement to German citizenship. Those who were allowed into the country needed to be integrated socially, politically, and economically, just like the expellees after 1945.

In contrast, the expellee organizations pursued a different course of action.[30] Their leadership had for years reconceptualized "belonging" to include a sense of ethnic ownership, and sought to capitalize on the opportunities offered by the transition in Central and Eastern Europe and the ensuing reconciliation process. Thus, the concept of ethnic ownership became more and more clearly shaped, and with it the goals that expellee organizations sought to realize through the politics of belonging. These goals are defined by expellee activists as a right to return (permanently) to their former homelands, and the entitlement to compensation for their suffering and to restitution of expropriated property. In realizing this particular conception of the politics of belonging, the expellee organizations have been presented with unprecedented opportunities in the past several years that allowed them to attach their demands to the bandwagon of mainstream (institutional) politics and win some "mindshare" in the public discourse. The first of these opportunities presented itself in the form of the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, the second in the form of several successful class actions in the United States, and threats thereof, aimed at compensation for forced labour during the Second World War, and the third in the form of the European Union enlargement process.

The conflict in Kosovo with its large-scale population displacements, and subsequent international intervention to reverse them, in more than one way resembled what many expellees had experienced themselves, but also symbolized the hopes of some of them, namely, the international recognition and enforcement of the right of people not to be expelled from their homeland, or at least to return to it if an expulsion could not be prevented. Pictures from Kosovo also brought home to many others, in Germany and elsewhere, the horrors of refugee tracks, sparking a broad public debate on an issue that had, for the most part, been deliberately ignored in the German media. By comparing, and linking, their own plight to that of Kosovo Albanians, expellee organizations managed to align themselves with a political strategy that was beyond moral reproach: that of preventing, or reversing, ethnic cleansing. By supporting the policy of Germany during the conflict, the expellee organizations sought to prepare the ground upon which they then could reopen the debate on their own suffering more than fifty years earlier. Already in 1995, the expellee organizations saw their cause recognized at higher international levels when the then UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, José Ayala Lasso, emphasized in a speech in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt that the right not to be expelled from one's homeland was a funda-

mental human right and noted that, while the peoples in Central and Eastern Europe had suffered terribly under German occupation during the Second World War and thus had a legitimate claim to reparations, such claims "must not be realized through collective victimization on the basis of general discrimination and without the thorough investigation of individual guilt."[31] Even more relevant to the current political agenda of the leadership of the expellee organizations was a report of the UN Commission on Human Rights, entitled *Human Rights and Population Transfer*. In its Annex II, it included a Draft Declaration on Population Transfer and the Implantation of Settlers, which stated in Article 8 that:

> "[e]very person has the right to return voluntarily, and in safety and dignity, to the country of origin and, within it, to the place of origin or choice. The exercise of the right to return does not preclude the victim's right to adequate remedies, including restoration of properties of which they were deprived in connection with or as a result of population transfers, compensation for any property that cannot be restored to them, and any other reparations provided for in international law."[32]

As implied in the Draft Declaration, besides the right to return, forcibly displaced persons should also be entitled to the restitution of, or compensation for, property lost as a consequence of their forced displacement. This remains a very sensitive issue, particularly in German-Czech relations.[33] In the eyes of the Sudeten German Regional-Cultural Association, the compensation of forced labourers during the Second World War, and also the negotiations between Germany and the representatives of survivors from Nazi labour camps, provided some of the expellees who had suffered particular hardship during the expulsion and/or in labour camps in Czechoslovakia after 1945 with an equally legitimate claim to receive a symbolic gesture of compensation from the German-Czech Future Fund. Arguing that this would be an important contribution to the reconciliation between Sudeten Germans and Czechs, the Sudeten German Regional-Cultural Association submitted a bid to the fund's executive board, where it was promptly, and with great publicity, rejected. At the same time, class action had also been considered as a possible route to realize claims for the compensation of losses resulting from collective expropriation and where possible for the restitution of properties that had been confiscated in this process.[34] Plans for class action in the US, initially against insurance companies that profited from the collective expropriation of the Sudeten Germans, have been officially supported by the leadership of the Sudeten German association.[35]

A number of opportunities on the European stage have also been exploited by expellee activists, and their success in this area has boosted the confidence of some of the political leaders of the expellee organizations. In April 1999, a resolution was passed by the European Parliament in which its members called "on the Czech Government, in the same spirit of reconciliatory statements made by President Havel, to repeal the surviving laws and decrees from 1945 and 1946, insofar as they concern the expulsion of individual ethnic groups in the former Czechoslovakia."[36] This is a highly sensitive issue not only in Czech-EU relations, but also in Czech-German relations and within the political processes in both countries. Interestingly, a key political activist of the Sudeten Germans, Bernd Posselt, has been a member of the European Parliament since 1994 and serves on the Committee on Citizens' Freedoms and Rights as Vice Chairman, and on the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy as a substitute member. Since 1994, he has also been a member of the cross-party Working Group on Minorities and served as its chairman in 1996–97. He has been prominently involved in the drafting and passing of this resolution by the European Parliament. The fact that there was only a small majority in favour of the resolution in 1999 must have been interpreted by the Czech government and parliament as an opportunity to intervene. Thus, the Czech parliamentarian and member of the Czech Parliament-European Parliament Mixed Commission Jan Zahradil tried to reverse the European Parliament's decision but failed after an intervention by Posselt pointing to the autonomy of the European parliament in reaching its decisions. In a new attempt to prevent a similar formulation in the 2000 resolution of the European Parliament on the status of negotiations on the Czech Republic's membership application, Zahradil and his deputy Lastuvka wrote a letter to all 626 members of the European Parliament, but all they achieved was an increased interest in the issue of how far the Beneš Decrees are in fact compatible with EU law and principles, resulting in a somewhat stronger formulation, stating that the European Parliament "welcomes the Czech government's willingness to scrutinise the laws and decrees of the Beneš Government dating from 1945 and 1946 and still on the statute books to ascertain whether they run counter to the EU law in force and the Copenhagen criteria".[37]

The first European Parliament resolution was immediately seized upon by a group of members of the Bundestag who proposed a motion, co-sponsored by the CDU/CSU parliamentary party, in which the federal government was asked "to take appropriate action in the spirit of the [resolution of the European Parliament] ... on its own and in collaboration with the other EU mem-

ber states and the institutions of the EU."[38] A counter-motion was introduced by the parliamentary parties of SPD and Alliance 90/The Greens in October 1999, in which the Bundestag was asked to welcome the statement by Chancellor Schroeder and Czech Minister-President Zeman of March 8, 1999, that "neither government will re-introduce property issues [into their bilateral relationship] either today or in the future."[39] This motion received a majority vote both at committee stage and after a parliamentary debate in June 2000, while that of the CDU/CSU parliamentarians was rejected.

What is interesting in relation to these debates on restitution and compensation in general is that the old left-right dichotomy in the political process in Germany on issues concerning the expulsion of ethnic Germans has been restored. For a period of about three years from the mid-1990s onwards, there seemed to be a certain recognition of the fact that the expulsion had been a human tragedy, and that there had been an unjust neglect by the German left of the suffering of the expellees and their contribution to the reconciliation process with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.[40] This certainly contributed to the fact that issues of and related to the expulsion have recently regained considerable discursive power. Yet, with the (attempted) linking of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans to the Czech Republic's EU accession, the politics of belonging has also regained an unexpected institutional dimension. Even though it is unlikely that the admission of the Czech Republic to the EU would not proceed because of the country's failure to rescind the relevant decrees,[41] the commitment of the EU to human rights in its accession policy gives advocates of a re-examination of the expulsion issue a powerful platform from which not only human rights violations of the Czechoslovak and Polish governments at the time could be addressed, but also the way in which their successors have dealt with the issue. Thus, by reopening the debate of where exactly the expellees' homeland is, the political leadership of the expellee organizations was able to preserve the degree of ambiguity about the relationship between homeland and belonging that they require in order to promote their and their constituents' interests.

Yet, it has also been recognized that these interests could be much more effectively pursued if the expellees received broader public recognition as victims. In order to achieve this, the leadership of the expellee organizations had to reshape the notion of victimhood of both victims of Nazi Germany and victims of the governments established in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War. In doing so, expellee activists do not aim at denying that groups that have long been recognized as victims have suffered and, therefore, have every right to claim compensation. Rather, the objective is to achieve for their own members the same international recognition (including from countries like Poland and the Czech Republic) with all its legal consequences.[42] From the perspective of the BdV, the opportunities to do so seem better than ever.[43] However, it is important to realize that the notion of victimhood as a central part of expellee identity is by no means a new element, nor could it be one given the very real experience of expulsion. What has changed, catapulting victimhood back to centre stage in the debate about belonging, is the fact that the current national and international environments provide a wealth of opportunities for the expellee organizations to associate their clientele with a group identity that seemed likely to further their key objectives.

Conclusion: Reckoning with the Past

Belonging is a complex and multi-dimensional notion. In the case of the German expellees, it has manifested itself primarily in terms of an ambiguous relationship to past and present homelands. While the relationship to the present homeland, expressed in demands for integration as citizens with equal rights and as members of the German cultural nation, has been relatively uncontested, the relationship to the past homeland has not only divided the domestic public discourse in Germany, it has also had significant implications for the Federal Republic's bilateral relations with Poland and the Czech Republic, and now also has the potential to affect the dynamics of EU enlargement.

The reason why the expulsion of the ethnic Germans more than fifty years ago still gives rise to heated debate and has a bearing on institutional processes at German and European levels can not only be seen in the magnitude of the expulsions and the suffering they inflicted on those affected by them. It has also to do with the fact that this particular aspect of the Second World War and its consequences has never been properly dealt with by means of a broad and open public debate in Germany or Poland or Czechoslovakia/the Czech Republic. More than thirty years after the advent of the new *Ostpolitik*, the political left and right continue to be divided over this issue, raising the political profile of, and stakes in, a debate that should essentially be about reconciliation and forgiveness. Instead, issues that are a matter of human rights become highly politicized and are presented in contexts with which they have little or nothing in common. In turn, because of ideological preconceptions, obvious links and connections between historical and current events are denied, thus creating double standards in the application and implementation of basic human rights. More often than not, radicalization and alienation inside and outside Germany have been the result.

Thus, while belonging is a concept that has, for each individual and collective, strong roots in the past and the present, it also has implications for the future. In the case of the German expellees, this has led to a complicated duality between *Heimat*, their traditional homelands in Central and Eastern Europe, and *Zuhause*, their newly found home in the Federal Republic of Germany. The majority of them have reconciled themselves with the fact that a return to their *Heimat*, in the sense of restoring a permanent homeland for an ethnically German return-migrant population anywhere in Central and Eastern Europe, is impossible (and for many of them also undesirable). Nevertheless, the failure to recognize the injustice of collective victimization, and in some cases its deliberate denial, remains a potent source of mobilization. It also enables political activists to manipulate remotely related issues and to continue to incite debates on the expulsion and its consequences, often with no positive results either for the expellees and their descendents or for the remaining ethnic Germans in Central and Eastern Europe on behalf of whom they claim to act. While it is unlikely, and to some extent also undesirable, to achieve complete closure on an issue as politically and emotionally loaded as the expulsion of almost fourteen million people, a modus vivendi should be sought that would reconcile the ambiguity in the dual conception of belonging and allow the notions of *Heimat* and *Zuhause* to coexist without polarizing or threatening implications for any of those affected by it.

Notes

1. These included 8.2 million German citizens who were expelled from formerly German territories east of the rivers Oder and Neisse as well as 3.2 million Czech citizens of German ethnicity from the Sudetenland, and 2.4 million ethnic Germans from other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
2. Anthony Giddens, *The Third Way* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998), 129.
3. The experience of those resettled in the later East Germany was the same, but the conditions they found were fundamentally different and did not allow them to create, let alone institutionalize, a collective identity based on the experience of expulsion. Therefore, my focus in the following will be exclusively on West Germany and, for the period after 1990, on the reunited Germany.
4. Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (London: Vintage, 1994), 7.
5. Gertjan Dijkink, *National Identity and Geopolitical Vision* (London: Routledge, 1996), 1.
6. Anthony Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 3.
7. Ibid.
8. Ignatieff, 7.
9. All three manifestations of this third scenario can be observed in relation to ethnic German expellees from Poland and Czechoslovakia. Cf. below for examples. It should also be noted that, apart from political strategies aimed at preserving the homeland as a source of identification and mobilization, forced migrations are often also the theme of novelists, poets, and other creative artists who address many of the aspects involved in such traumatic experiences and thus also contribute to the preservation of (memories of) the homeland and the circumstances of its loss.
10. This is not to say that there were no problems between the "native" population and expellees, especially in the early post-war period, characterized by a shortage of food, housing, and employment. These tensions, however, soon disappeared once economic recovery began.
11. "Charta der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen, gegeben zu Stuttgart am 5. August 1950," *Kulturelle Arbeitshefte* 22 (1995): 15.
12. In a way, the duality of activities also reflects the way in which different, nested identities coexisted quite comfortably: a geographically and socio-culturally specific regional/homeland identity, an identity as expellee, and an identity as German/West German citizen.
13. There are currently five associated organizations: the Women's Union, the Youth League, the Farmers' Union, the Students' Union, and the Association of Eastern German Track and Field Athletes.
14. For example, the BdV fought the so-called *Ostverträge* by, among other things, supporting individual complaints against them before the German Constitutional Court. All these complaints, however, were dismissed in a ruling by the court in 1975.
15. This is most explicit with respect to campaign posters in the run-up to federal elections right up until the early 1960s, in which all major parties denounced the Oder-Neisse line.
16. This only began to change gradually after the 1985 publication of Wolfgang Benz's edited collection *Die Vertreibung der Deutschen aus dem Osten: Ursachen, Ereignisse, Folgen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1985).
17. There was a brief spell of greater harmony between government and BdV after 1982 when the CDU/CSU and FDP coalition under Helmut Kohl came to power. But even this lasted for only a few years: In 1985, Kohl personally intervened to have the motto for the twenty-first annual meeting of the Silesian expellees changed from "40 Years of Expulsion B Silesia Remains Ours" to "40 Years of Expulsion B Silesia Remains Our Future in the Europe of Free Peoples." By the same token, Herbert Hupka, the Chairman of the *Landsmannschaft Schlesien*, lost his safe seat on the CDU party list for the federal elections in 1987.
18. Several challenges to the original *Ostverträge* before the German Federal Constitutional Court in the 1970s failed but received wide and controversial media coverage in Germany and beyond.
19. This becomes obvious, also, by looking at various survey results on issues of national identification. In 1994, for

example, only fifteen per cent of those seeing themselves as expellees identified more strongly in terms of their regional origin than in terms of their German citizenship. For the former East Germany, this figure is even lower at only seven per cent (Renate Köcher, "Vertriebene der Erlebnis- und Nachfolgegeneration. Ergebnisse einer Sekundäranalyse," *Deutschland und seine Nachbarn. Forum für Kultur und Politik*, 21 (1997), 3B67, here 57). Equally interesting is the fact that among the Sudeten Germans and members of their families, who are generally seen as the most hardline advocates of a right to return and the restitution of property, only fifty-six per cent actually indicated sympathy for demands for compensation/restitution, while one-third rejected the idea. Of those sympathetic to compensation/restitution demands, almost one-third declared that Sudeten Germans should, nevertheless, abandon these demands for political reasons (Köcher, 55).

20. Thereafter the BdV started two further initiatives. One was for the Europeanization of the Oder-Neisse territories, the other to enable members of the German minority in Poland to vote in parliamentary elections in the Federal Republic. Both failed.
21. Harry Hochfelder, "Über die Ziele sudetendeutscher Politik," in *Die Sudetendeutschen und ihre Heimat. Erbe B Auftrag B Ziel*, ed. Rolf-Josef Eibicht (Wesseding: Gesamtdeutscher Verlag), 58.
22. Roland Schnürch, "Konsequenzen sudetendeutscher Heimatpolitik," in *Die Sudetendeutschen und ihre Heimat. Erbe B Auftrag B Ziel*. ed. Rolf-Josef Eibicht, (Wesseding: Gesamtdeutscher Verlag, 1991), 83.
23. "Personal autonomy," also referred to as non-territorial, cultural, or segmental autonomy, is a concept that describes a particular approach to minority protection according to which membership in a particular ethnic group entitles individuals to certain, primarily cultural, rights, such as separate educational institutions, minority language publications, etc. It also assigns self-government rights in such areas to the minority group. It is thus clearly distinguished from territorial forms of autonomy, but is in practice often combined with them. Early practical applications are the millet system in the Ottoman Empire, and certain minority rights granted in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in Estonia and Latvia in the interwar period. More recently, the South Tyrol autonomy arrangements include aspects of personal autonomy, as does minority legislation in Estonia, Hungary, and Russia. Theoretically, the concept dates back to Adolf Frischhof's *Österreich und die Bürgerschaften seines Bestandes* (Vienna, 1869). It was later picked up by Austromarxists Karl Renner [e.g., *Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Nationen in besonderer Anwendung auf Österreich* (Leipzig, 1918)] and Otto Bauer [e.g., *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Leipzig, 1924)] in their studies on how to establish a viable framework within which the different ethnocultural groups of the Austro-Hungarian empire could thrive without posing a threat to the unity of the state and vice versa. In contemporary political science, the concept is, for example, part of Arend Lijphart's model of consociational democracy [e.g., *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven and London, 1977)].
24. Johann Böhm, "Address to the Sudeten German Day," June 11, 2000.
25. This development was already foreshadowed in the negotiations of the 1991 German-Polish Treaty. In return for Poland's recognition and protection of the German minority, "the German government would further reduce its support for, and would further distance itself from, those elements among the *Landsmannschaften* who demanded the right of return to their places of origin and/or compensation from the Polish government for material and emotional harm suffered as a result of their expulsion" (Karl Cordell, "Poland's German Minority," in *German Minorities in Europe: Ethnic Identity and National Belonging*, ed. Stefan Wolff [Oxford: Berghahn, 2000], 78B99, here 87).
26. This was one aspect of the policy response to the growing number of ethnic Germans migrating to the Federal Republic, the other being the introduction of more restrictive legislation that made it harder for ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe to become German citizens. Both policies had essentially one objective in common, namely to restrict ethnic German immigration.
27. In 1997, the federal budget allocated 5.1 million Deutschmark; in 1998, 4.7 million; and in 1999, 4.4 million for the support of measures of the expellee organizations aimed at the promotion of peaceful coexistence with the countries in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, the BdV received an annual amount of around 3.5 million Deutschmark in institutional funding under the budget title of "Measures promoting the integration of (ethnic German) resettlers and expellees." Under the same title, in 1997 and 1998 more than 21 million Deutschmark were spent annually on specific projects; in 1999, this was increased to more than 38 million, compensating for cuts in other areas and as a result of attempts to administer these funds in a more centralized way.
28. Remarkably, Herbert Hupka, the chairman of the Upper Silesian Regional-Cultural Association and for decades portrayed in Poland as the incarnation of German territorial revisionism, was awarded the Honorary Medal of his former hometown of Ratibor for his commitment to the economic reconstruction of the area.
29. A survey in Bavaria, where most of the Sudeten German expellees and their descendants live, showed that only half of all respondents who had heard of the declaration considered it as contributing to an improvement of relations with the Czech Republic. Only one-fifth felt that the interests of the Sudeten Germans were adequately reflected in the declaration (Köcher, 53f.). However, the same survey is also very telling from a different point of view: only little more than half of those of Sudeten German origin, or with a family member of Sudeten German origin, had actually heard of the declaration (Köcher, 54).
30. In fairness to the expellee organizations, they had been actively committed to help ethnic German immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet

Union integrate in the Federal Republic since the mid-1980s.

31. José Ayala Lasso, "Address to the German Expellees," May 28, 1995.
32. UN Commission on Human Rights, "Human Rights and Population Transfer. Final Report of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Al-Khasawneh" (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1997/23).
33. In an attempt to take the heat out of bilateral relations, the German Chancellor Schroeder and the Czech Minister-President Milos Zeman issued a joint statement on March 8, 1999, declaring that neither side intended to burden their bilateral relations with "property issues" resulting from developments after the Second World War (cf. "Bonn verzichtet auf Vertriebenen-Ansprüche," *Die Welt*, March 9, 1999, 1). The following day it became clear that this had backfired domestically, and Schroeder's foreign policy adviser, Michael Steiner, issued another statement in which he declared that the German government did not have the right or the intention to interfere with any private claims of individual expellees (cf. "Bonn: Private Ansprüche haben Bestand," *Die Welt*, March 10, 1999, 3).
34. Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft, "SL für Ausschöpfung weiterer Rechtswege," Press Release, July 7, 1999.
35. In contrast, the leadership of the BdV has, in relation to similar considerations concerning expellees from Poland, expressed the view that such actions would be counterproductive and affect the German minority still living in the country in a negative way. The reason for these different approaches, however, is not only the size and influence of the German minority groups in both countries. The relations between expellees and Poland have developed more constructively since the early 1990s and the organizations representing expellees from the territory of today's Poland are less well organized and do not enjoy the same influence and backing as the Sudeten Germans who have their power base in the state of Bavaria.
36. European Parliament, *Resolution on the Regular Report from the Commission on the Czech Republic's Progress towards Accession*, (COM[98]0708 B C4-0111/99). Prior to this resolution of the European Parliament, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution on October 13, 1998, in which members of the House demanded that the formerly communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe "return wrongfully expropriated properties to their rightful owners or, when actual return is not possible, to pay prompt, just and effective compensation, in accordance with principles of justice and in a manner that is just, transparent and fair" (House of Representatives [105th Congress, Second Session], "House Resolution No. 562," [HRES 562 IH], 1998).
37. European Parliament, "Resolution on the Czech Republic's membership application to the European Union and the state of negotiations," (COM[1999] 503 B C5-0026/2000 B 1997/2180[COS]).
38. Deutscher Bundestag, "Antrag der Abgeordneten Hartmut Koschyk, Christian Schmidt (Fürth), Karl Lamers, Peter Hintze und der Fraktion der CDU/CSU: Versöhnung durch Ächtung von Vertreibung," *Bundestagsdrucksache* 14/1311, June 29, 1999.
39. Deutscher Bundestag, "Antrag der Fraktionen SPD und Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: Weiterentwicklung der deutsch-tschechischen Beziehungen," *Bundestagsdrucksache* 14/1873, 26 October 1999.
40. In a speech at the commemoration ceremony of the fiftieth anniversary of the BdV in May 1999, the German Minister of the Interior noted that "[c]ontrary to frequent prejudice, the ethnic German expellees have, in their overwhelming majority, actively participated in the process of reconciliation between the European nations, and they continue to do so today" (Otto Schily, "Die Erinnerung und das Gedenken findet ihren Sinn in dem Willen für eine bessere Zukunft," May 29, 1999). In her address on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Cultural Foundation of the German Expellees, the chairperson of the Culture and Media Committee of the Bundestag, Elke Leonhard of the SPD, emphasized that nobody had the right to "discredit as revisionism the legitimate interests of the expellees in the preservation of their culture and the public acknowledgement of their fate ..." (Leonhard, Elke, "Die Verantwortung der Politik für die gesamtdeutsche Kultur," June 14, 1999). Ironically, a dispute with the then Secretary of State for Culture, Michael Naumann, over the (under)funding of cultural institutions of the expellees prompted Leonhard to resign her post on June 30, 2000.
41. Although the Austrian Parliament, the Österreichischer Nationalrat, passed a resolution in May 1999 asking the Austrian government to use its influence to effect the repeal of the relevant Beneš Decrees, it is unlikely that Austria would use its veto power in the Council of Ministers to block Czech membership in the EU over this issue. Cf. Österreichischer Nationalrat, "Entschließung des Nationalrates vom 19. Mai 1999 betreffend Aufhebung der 'Beneš-Dekrete' und der 'AVNOJ-Bestimmungen'," Stenographisches *Protokoll der 169. Sitzung des Nationalrates (XX. GP)*, 69.
42. To give a few examples of how the Sudeten German Regional Association has tried to capitalize on recent debates on human rights: On October 8, 1999, the then Speaker of the Sudeten Germans, Franz Neubauer, declared his solidarity with a declaration by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, in which the Czech Republic was accused of apartheid-style politics after plans to build a wall around a Roma residential quarter in a town in Northern Bohemia had become public (cf. Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft, "Neubauer: Verständnis für Roma in der CR," October 8, 1999). On April 7, 1999, all Sudeten Germans in Germany were urged to donate money for Kosovo refugees, reasoning that solidarity with the people in Kosovo would sensitize the German and international public to the fate of the Sudeten Germans as well (Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft, "Neubauer ruft Sudetendeutsche zu Spenden für Kosovo auf," April 7, 1999). The motto of the annual Sudeten German Day in 2000 was: 'For a Worldwide Ban on Expulsions' (*Vertreibung weltweit ächten*) (cf. Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft, "Aufruf des Sprechers

Franz Neubauer zum 51. Sudetendeutschen Tag 2000," no date). On March 24, 2000, Neubauer welcomed the fact that Czech victims of Nazi forced-labour camps were to receive compensation and noted that this implied a recognition of the fact that crimes "of a certain dimension do not fall under the statute of limitations" and that their victims have to be compensated sooner or later. This was seen as "good news for the German expellees" (cf. Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft, "Neubauer: Entschädigung für Zwangsarbeiter ist zu begrüßen und bestätigt Offenheit der sudetendeutschen Frage," March 24, 2000).

43. One earlier example of an attempt to reshape victimhood exists in the form of a declaration submitted by the Sudeten Germans to the UN in January 1978, in which the VI. Federal Assembly of the Sudeten German Regional-Cultural Association maintains its claims to the restitution of expropriated property with specific reference to, among others, UN Resolution 3236 of November 22, 1974, on the rights of the people of Palestine. Cf. United Nations General Assembly, *Resolution 3236 of 22 November 1974 on the Question of Palestine.* (A/RES/3236 (XXIX).

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